

Vienna,
10 March, '88.

Dear Sarah,

I received such a nice letter from Philip about Alan Driver, and also from Gabi. I want to quote from these, also for the benefit of a few friends. Philip, as Jonothan knows, was Samanera together with Phra Dhammadharo in Wat phleng. I quote:

I was shocked to hear of the death of Alan Driver yet not surprised by the circumstance. He was a good friend to me for much of the time I was ~~in~~ in Thailand, though he was sometimes so ~~hard~~ hard on me but more often on himself. I loved him and remembered ~~some~~ fondly some of the times we shared at Wat Phleng Vipassana. He was the one who introduced me to the moment, and Buddhism. It was not long after talking with him that I left the school I was ~~attending~~ attending in Bangkok and ordained as a novice. He took great care to teach me all he knew and I was very sad the last talk he gave one night before he left for Australia to teach. I remember once down in Rayong, a small temple near ~~the~~ Cambodia, we all studied Dhamma in very natural and rural ~~the~~ Thai surroundings. He spoke best when things were not so busy and when he felt people were listening. I found though that his letters and writing reflected a more personal and human touch of the Dhamma, as though he was able to taper the truth to reach the person he wrote to, almost like the Buddha did in the parables of the Dhammapada. Wherever he is, he will hear the Dhamma again, for he has a longing and love for peace of mind. It must be painful for you because you knew him better as Alan when he became more Thai in nature. That was good to hear. He loved the Thai, respected and practised their ways and loved to speak Thai with them, something I did not learn much of... I am sorry for the loss of your friend Alan Driver but feel that he lives and teaches still in our memory of him. He was a gentle man who loved Buddhism and the Thai, wanted to be like them, and perhaps, at this moment, he touches someone with love the way he did us...

Sarah, I like this idea that Alan can still teach us in our memory for him. We can be exhorted through memory of him to really consider the Dhamma in our life, not just to repeat from the book. But how difficult. You wrote in your letter:

Khun Sujin is saying that she ~~is not~~ was not shocked by the news and how it (death) is not different from this moment, just our clinging to self makes it shocking.

When reading this I realized even more that I can repeat from

the book, that I have intellectual understanding of not self. It is all very reasonable: only fleeting phenomena, nothing abiding. But there are moments that we cannot swallow the truth, and the reason is lack of direct understanding of nama and rupa. When someone who is dear to us has died there is the test: how much have we realized, and we know that realization is far off. On the other hand, we should remember that it is not the beginning but the end of a long development, the realization of not self.

In the course of the development of vipassana one realizes through direct experience conditions, sees clearly that vipaka is the result of kamma, that it has to happen like that. Then one will not be so shocked. When we say that we are shocked there is strong aversion, no shame for akusala, no fear of blame (no hiri and anottappa). When one is anagami there will not be aversion. But before? Do you ~~ya~~ remember that Alan once spoke about a sakadagami who died of a broken heart?

Death is not different from this moment, that is true. Citta arises and falls away, now and the last moment of this lifespan. It is good to be reminded that it is urgent to develop direct understanding. It is the only way to be able to swallow the truth of dukkha.

I did not tell Lodewijk that Khun Sujin was not shocked (and that death is not different from this moment.) I ~~know~~ know he would be upset. We have to bring it all in a gentle context, as Philip said, Alan knew how to reach the person he wanted to explain Dhamma to. It seems too cool, but in fact it is not the conventional ~~way~~ meaning of cool. Cool in the sense of undisturbed is a different matter. Instead of aversion, being shocked, there is room for kindness, compassion with those who bear a loss. And that is what ~~ya~~ you experienced while you were in Thailand, attending the cremation, going out with the boat where his ashes with flower petals were brought out into the sea, and it all floated away. You mentioned how kind all were to you and Jonathan, and it must have been a comfort. Because of all their kusala it was impossible to stay sad for long. So, we have to place Khun Sujin's words in this context, so that they will not be misunderstood.

Now I quote from Gabi's letter:

I had to repeatedly read your letter with the news of Alan's death, in order to understand what had happened. I could simply not imagine it.

I would have liked to ~~wrk~~ write something, but I did not

quite know how. I observed three fasting days in memory of him.

When we were with Alan in India the last time, in Alan encouraged us to keep Uposatha together, since it was Uposatha day. Gabi also observed it and she was thinking of this when she decided that it was a way of kusala, for the memory of Alan. Gabi then quoted Alan's saying I had mentioned in my article, that we should consider the Dhamma at various levels, with regard to personal relations, to private thoughts and to ultimate realities. Then Gabi described how she actually did this, with regard ~~to~~ to kamma and vipāka:

I found it always easy ^{to consider} ~~the~~ decisive things in life like sickness, death, great material loss as vipāka.

I have often heard that each moment of seeing, hearing, smelling, tasting and ~~%~~ experiencing tangible object is vipāka-citta. But only now incited the "considering at various levels", as Alan wrote, me to at least intellectually understand what ~~happens~~ is happening in my own life.

Gabi then speaks about the way customers complain in the travel agency where she works. They speak in a disagreeable way and Gabi had aversion, wanted to correct them. She had aversion about her aversion and concluded that the customers spoke in such a way because of conceit. But she then discovered that her aversion was also conditioned by conceit. She wrote:

Now it dawned on me. Every moment in life is conditioned, I cannot change anything, I cannot avoid anything.

When we have to hear unpleasant sounds, disagreeable words it is conditioned, it is vipāka.

I was relieved, because vipāka can be followed by wise attention (to the object) or unwise attention. At the moment it is still unwise attention, but once it will be wise attention, ^{when} there are the right conditions!

It is a nice way to remember Alan's teaching, when one really tries to consider the Dhamma in one's life. There can only be ^{more} right conditions for wise attention when right understanding of nama and rupa is being developed, although we cannot expect result right away. It often is, as Jonothan once said: "The kusala did not want to come." We can realize that also the akusala citta arises because of its own conditions.

Kind regards,

Nina.

Dear Mr. Fex,

You wrote about your experiences in a meditation center in Thailand where you learned about Buddhism .As to the development of vipassanā you understood that you have to suppress desire as well as like and dislike in order to create the condition for vipassanā wisdom. However, there seems to be a gap between your life in the meditation center and life at home. You wrote: "Back in Sweden I find it difficult to practise vipassanā. I am surrounded by western desires and kilesa (defilements) leads me astray..."

Some people want to apply themselves to meditation without realizing that there are two different kinds of meditation: samatha, the development of calm, and vipassanā, the development of understanding of all realities of our daily life. Samatha and vipassanā have different aims, different ways of development. In samatha defilements are temporarily subdued by the development of calm. In order to develop calm which is wholesome, precise knowledge of one's consciousness, citta, arising at that moment is necessary. Otherwise one takes for wholesome calm what is not really wholesome but clinging to silence, to relaxation or to one's own practice. There is not only one type of consciousness, citta, but there are many different types, arising one at a time and succeeding one another very rapidly. There are types of citta which are neither wholesome nor unwholesome, such as seeing or hearing. There are types which are unwholesome, akusala, and types which are wholesome, kusala. Each citta is accompanied by several mental factors, cetasikas. Akusala citta is accompanied by akusala cetasikas, such as attachment, aversion or ignorance. Kusala citta is accompanied by beautiful cetasikas, sobhana cetasikas, such as non-attachment, non-aversion, calm and mindfulness. Calm is a sobhana cetasika which arises with each kusala citta. When one is truly generous the citta is calm, it is temporarily away from attachment, aversion and ignorance. When one observes morality (sīla), such as abstaining from stealing or lying, the citta is calm. Calm does not last, it falls away immediately with the citta it accompanies. Since cittas succeed one another extremely rapidly it is difficult to know when the citta is kusala citta and when akusala citta. We may not know the moments there is clinging, which is unwholesome. When there is attachment or clinging there is not always pleasant feeling, attachment can also be accompanied by indifferent feeling. Attachment is likely to arise after seeing or hearing; when we go somewhere or take up a glass or pen there is likely to be attachment.

From morning to night we think mostly of ourselves. We even cling to our own kusala, we expect some advantage or gain from it or we have conceit about it. Attachment lures us all the time. It is difficult to know exactly when the citta is kusala citta and when akusala citta, but it is essential to know this in order to develop calm. As we have seen, there is calm with each kusala citta, but when one knows the characteristic of calm higher degrees of it can be developed with a suitable meditation subject. Such subjects are described in the "Visuddhimagga" (Ch IV-XII). They are, for example, the Buddha's virtues, lovingkindness, recollection of death or the foulness of the body. For those who have accumulated skill for the development of calm, stages of absorption or jhāna can be attained. However, this is extremely difficult and many conditions have to be fulfilled. At the moment of jhāna defilements are temporarily suppressed. Through calm defilements cannot be eradicated.

- ③ Vipassanā, insight, is right understanding of all realities in us and around us. It is to be developed in one's daily life, during one's work, when one is together with other people. One should get to know oneself in any situation, one should know one's defilements thoroughly. We can find out that, instead of thinking of the benefit of others we cling to "self" most of the time. The clinging to self is deeply rooted, it causes the arising of many other defilements. When we are angry, do we take anger for "my anger"? Anger is a reality, it arises because of its appropriate conditions, it is not self. Should we try to suppress it and ignore it, or should it be known as it is, only a conditioned reality? What about attachment? There are many degrees of it, some of it more subtle, some more coarse.
- ④ When it arises right understanding of it should be developed, in order to see it as a conditioned reality, not self. Thus, it is not right to try to suppress defilements, to suppress like and dislike in order to create the right conditions for vipassanā, as you wrote. Anything which is real, also defilements should be known as they are. In this way the kind of understanding can be developed which can eradicate the wrong view of self. Only when the wrong view of self has been eradicated other defilements can be eradicated stage by stage.

We should not be surprised that there are so many defilements arising in our daily life. In the past there were defilements and thus there are conditions for their arising again and again. Each citta which arises falls away but the germs of akusala are carried on from one moment to the next moment of citta, since cittas succeed one another without there being any interval. Both good and bad

inclinations can be accumulated..

It is essential to know what the object of vipassanā is: any reality which appears at the present moment. You wrote: "The object for meditation is the four major positions: sitting, standing, lying and walking rūpa. Nāma, the mind, observes rūpa with awareness and thus tries to stay in the present moment as much as possible."

This is not precise enough. There are many different types of mental phenomena, nāma, and there are many different types of physical phenomena, rūpas. You speak about the mind which observes, but what we take for mind are many different types of cittas which arise and then fall away. What type of citta observes which type of reality at which moment, and what is that kind of observing? We have to be more precise about that.

We cling to the body but what we take for "my body" consists of different types of rūpa, physical units. These arise and then fall away rapidly, but they are replaced as long as there are conditions for them to be replaced, throughout our life. We pay attention only to continuity and fail to see that each rūpa which arises falls away. In order to understand the truth we have to become acquainted with different characteristics of rūpa when they appear. Rūpas of the body are for example the "Element of Earth" or solidity, which can be directly experienced as hardness or softness, the "Element of Fire" or temperature, which can be directly experienced as heat or cold, and the "Element of Wind" or motion, which can be directly experienced as motion or pressure. These rūpas can be directly experienced through the bodysense, without there being the need to name them or to think about them. Colour or visible object is another

rūpa and this can be experienced through the eyesense. Eyesense is rūpa, it does not experience anything, but it is the condition for the nāma which sees. There are the rūpas which are sound, odour and flavour; they are experienced by means of the appropriate senses which are also rūpas and these ^(are) the conditions for the experiencing of the sense-objects.

Rūpas are ultimate realities which can be directly experienced when they appear one at a time. Body is only a conventional reality, it is not real in the absolute sense. We cling to an idea of the whole body and take it for "my body", but that is an illusion. Did you ever see a row of ants? From afar they seem to be a line which stays. If you look more closely you will see that the line is made up by many different ants which move. Evenso is the

body not as solid as we would think, it is made up of different elements which do not stay.

There is no mind. What we call mind are many different moments of consciousness which do not stay. We should get to know different nāmas when they appear one at a time. Seeing is a nama which experiences visible object or colour. It is different from paying attention to shape and form which is thinking. Thinking is altogether different from seeing and occurs at a different moment. Hearing hears sound. Hearing does not know the origin of the sound nor its meaning. When the meaning of a sound is known there is thinking and this arises at a different moment. There can only be one citta at a time, be it seeing, hearing or thinking.

We are ignorant of nāma and rūpa. Ignorance covers up the nature of the reality which appears. We may believe that we can see and hear or see and know what something is at the same time. We cling to an idea of self who experiences. We seem to see something or somebody. In reality seeing sees only the rūpa which appears through the eyesense, visible object. After the seeing thinking occurs which is another type of nāma. Thinking can think of people, animals or houses. These are concepts, not ultimate realities. We never considered realities such as seeing and visible object, that is why we may be puzzled about these realities and wonder what they are. We are always infatuated by the thinking and the concepts and stories we are thinking of. We do not have to avoid thinking, it is natural, there are conditions for its arising. But thinking can be studied and considered when it appears, so that it can be known as a kind of nāma, different from the nāma which sees or hears.

Nāma and rūpa, realities which can be directly experienced, are the objects of which right understanding should be developed. This is the only way to be cured of the wrong view of self. Concepts such as the body as a whole or person, are objects we can think of but they are not ultimate realities. —————>

← Right understanding of the reality which appears can be developed when there is direct awareness of that reality. Awareness or mindfulness, ^(sati, is a) beautiful cetasika, sobhana cetasika. Each kusala citta is accompanied by sati. Sati is watchful or heedful. There is sati with generosity, with morality, with samatha and with vipassanā. When there is the development of calm in samatha sati is mindful, non-forgetful of the meditation subject. In vipassanā sati is non-forgetful of the reality appearing at the present moment. Sati can be directly aware of the nāma or rūpa

Desire for result is an enormous hindrance for the development of insight. Desire plays an important role in our going forth in the cycle of birth and death (samsara). It prevents us from knowing the present moment. You wrote that you practised part of the day, after having had instruction. We should get rid of the idea of practice, of "my practice". Self is behind it all. When there is immediate awareness of anything which appears, ~~we do not have to think of practice.~~ A friend in Sri Lanka who is translating my "Buddhism in Daily Life" into Sinhalese wrote to me:

How difficult it is to realize the truth! The truth that there is no self. "I must strive, I must have confidence in myself. I must do kusala kamma and avoid akusala"... But there is no "I" anywhere. It is not difficult to understand what is said but to realize it is the problem.

It is beneficial to realize the moments that there is clinging to the self, it can keep us from wrong practice. We all have inclinations to wrong practice so long as we have not attained the first stage of enlightenment, the stage of the sotāpanna. We should not count the years we studied Dhamma nor count the moments of sati. We should not compare ourselves with others or guess about someone else's awareness and insight. That is all useless speculation. There is only this moment now in which realities appear and can be studied with ~~awareness and right understanding.~~

As to your remarks about the four postures which you mentioned as objects of awareness, ~~the postures of walking, standing, sitting and lying down concern the body as a whole. The whole body or posture is not a reality but a concept or idea. The "Satipaṭṭhāna sutta" states,~~ ¹⁾:

And further, o Bhikkhus, when he is going, a bhikkhu understands: "I am going"; when he is standing, he understands: "I am standing"; when he is sitting, he understands: "I am sitting"; when he is lying down, he understands: "I am lying down"; or just as his body is disposed so he understands it.

The Commentary to this sutta (Papañcasūdanī) explains the words "I am going":

...In this matter of going, readily do dogs, jackals and the like, know when they move on that they are moving. But this instruction on the modes of deportment was not given concerning similar awareness, because awareness of that sort belonging

1) Translated with its commentary in "The Way of Mindfulness", Ven. Soma Thera, B.P.S. Kandy, Sri Lanka, 1975.

to animals does not shed the belief in a living being, does not knock out the perception of a soul and neither becomes a subject of meditation nor the development of the Arousing of Mindfulness.....

...On account of what does the going take place? On account of the diffusion of the process of oscillation (element of wind) born of mental activity.....

Further on in the commentary we read:

....When there is the arising of the thought "I am going forwards", just with that thought, appears the process of oscillation originating from mind which brings to birth bodily expression (or intimation). Thus by way of the diffusion of the process of oscillation due to mental activity, this skeleton called the body goes forward.

Conventional terms are used such as "I am going", but because of different conditioning factors this skeleton called the body, which consists of different rūpa-elements, moves forward. The Buddha spoke about the postures in order to remind us to be aware, no matter we are walking, standing, sitting and lying down. \longleftrightarrow Here not awareness in a general sense, such as awareness of animals, is meant, but sati, direct awareness of one nāma or rūpa which appears through one of the six doors.

You write that one should first know dukkha, then impermanence and then anattā, not self. As to dukkha, which is translated as sorrow or unsatisfactoriness, there are many levels of understanding it. When we think that life is unsatisfactory, we may be bored or have aversion towards life. That is not the realization of the noble Truth of dukkha. The truth of dukkha cannot be grasped by words, it can only be realized by insight which has been developed. Thus, it cannot be realized in the beginning. Insight is developed in stages. The first stage is knowing nāma as nāma and rūpa as rūpa, clearly distinguishing their different characteristics. There is seeing and seeing sees visible object. Sati can be aware of one reality at a time, either nāma or rūpa. When seeing and visible object seem to appear as a "whole" there is not yet right awareness of one object. In the beginning knowledge of realities is bound to be vague, the six doorways are mixed up, there is no clear understanding. We have to persevere being aware, there are only nāma and rūpa. At a later stage the arising and falling away, thus the impermanence, of nāma and rūpa can

realized. That is not thinking about impermanence, but direct experience of the impermanence of the *nāma* or *rūpa* which appears at the present moment. What is impermanent cannot be our true refuge and thus it is *dukkha*. What is impermanent has no abiding substance, it is not self. We may understand this intellectually, but direct understanding of *nāma* and *rūpa* has to be developed on and on, so that one day the three characteristics of impermanence, *dukkha* and not-self can be directly realized. The *sotāpanna* who has attained the first stage of enlightenment has realized the noble Truth of *dukkha*.

Some people think that the changing of one's posture when there is stiffness or pain hides the truth of *dukkha*. Through a change of posture one is temporarily relieved from pain, until that posture also becomes painful and one has to change again. However, not the changing of posture but the clinging to the very idea of posture hides the true nature of realities, of impermanence, *dukkha* and *anattā*. When one does not realize that each *rūpa* which arises falls away immediately, one continues to cling to the idea of "my posture", "I am sitting". We know through remembrance that we are sitting. However, we should also know that remembrance is a conditioned *nāma* and that there is no self who remembers.

As we have seen, in the ultimate sense there is no posture. It is beneficial to know the difference between the moments of *sati* and the moments there is thinking and no *sati*. At the moments there is no thinking of concepts or "stories", direct awareness can be developed. We should not try to have many moments of *sati*, then we are lured again by desire and this hinders the development of understanding. Not *sati* in itself is the aim, but right understanding. Even one or two moments of right awareness are precious, then understanding can begin to develop. Gradually understanding can be accumulated.

All realities should be known as not self. Defilements can be object of awareness. They are realities arising because of their own conditions. Also *kusala* should be known as not self, it does not belong to us. A friend in Thailand (Alan Driver) wrote to me about *dāna*, giving food to the monks. He performs *dāna* each morning. It is a great effort for him to get up early, but conditions work out in such a way that he simply has to get up. He wrote:

I bought a ricecooker for my maid who likes to give food to the monks in the morning but who had no means whereby to do so. I also bought a bag of rice and I gave the maid twenty baht

a day to buy some curry etc. And now bright and early every morning when everything is ready, the maid comes knocking on my door and says, "Sir, sir, the monks are coming." I wipe the sleep from my eyes (wish I could wipe the lobha, attachment, away at the same time!) go downstairs and perform dāna with her. It is wonderful, I shall have to stay in Thailand.

This story illustrates that kusala is conditioned, it does not arise because of a self. When we read about someone else's kusala there can be appreciation of it and this is also a form of dāna, generosity. At such a moment there are conditions for sympathetic joy (muditā), joy in the prosperity of someone else. The Buddha encouraged us to use the opportunities for any kind of kusala, be it dāna we perform ourselves, rejoicing in someone else's dāna, ~~←~~ abstaining from slandering, considering our body as a skeleton or being aware of nāma and rūpa. They are all means to think less of ourselves.

You write about being infatuated by western objects of defilement. No matter we are eastern or western, we are all human beings who are easily infatuated by the objects which are experienced through the senses. Through right understanding there will be less clinging to the self and thus we can become more agreeable in our speech and in our dealings with others. When we read suttas the development of right understanding is not always explicitly mentioned, but it is implied. When we remember this we will read the suttas in a different way. In the "Gradual Sayings" (I, Book of the Threes, Ch XIII, At Kusināra, par. 130, Carved on rock, earth and water.) we read about three kinds of persons. One person is always getting angry and his anger lasts long. His anger is like a rock-carving which is not soon erased by wind or water or by lapse of time. One person is always getting angry but his anger does not last long. His anger is compared to a trace on the ground which is soon erased by wind or water or by lapse of time. We read about the third kind of person:

Herein a certain person, though he be harshly spoken to, sharply spoken to, rudely spoken to, yet is he easily reconciled, he becomes agreeable and friendly. Just as what is carved on water soon disappears and lasts not long; even so, monks, here we have a certain person who, though harshly spoken to... yet becomes agreeable and friendly. This one is called "one like carving on water"...